

# Implications of Hamka's thoughts in Tafsir al-Azhar on the standpoint of Islamic social organization in preventing authoritarianism in Indonesia

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## **Abstract**

Indonesian Islamic social organizations not only serve as religious groups but also as interest groups, facing challenges when it comes to involvement in political matters. This library research analyzed the connection between thoughts and practices relating

to the standpoint of Islamic social organizations toward the state. The research data were collected from Hamka's thoughts in Tafsir al-Azhar and historical documents of Muhammadiyah and the Indonesian Ulema Council during the early period of the New Order, i.e., 1970-1980. This study examines how Hamka interpreted Quranic verses about the relationship between society and the state and how this influenced the practices of Indonesian Islamic social organizations in their interactions with the state. Finally, it is concluded that Hamka considers *Syura* (deliberation) as a determinant in the relationship between society and state and a distinction between state and religious authority. Hamka's emphasis on deliberation as the foundation of the relationship between society and the state has greatly improved the quality of democracy. His influential position within Muhammadiyah has shaped the organization's stance, leading it to become a self-sufficient religious and social empowerment group. Muhammadiyah has effectively acted as a civil society organization, resisting oppressive political regimes to promote democratization in Indonesia.

Organisasi-organisasi kemasyarakatan Islam di Indonesia tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kelompok keagamaan tetapi juga sebagai kelompok kepentingan, menghadapi tantangan dalam keterlibatan pada urusan politik. Penelitian kepustakaan ini menganalisis hubungan antara pemikiran dan praktik yang berkaitan dengan organisasi sosial Islam terhadap negara. Data penelitian dikumpulkan dari pemikiran Hamka dalam Tafsir al-Azhar dan dokumen sejarah Muhammadiyah dan Majelis Ulama Indonesia pada masa awal Orde Baru, yakni tahun 1970-1980. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana Hamka menafsirkan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tentang hubungan masyarakat dan negara, serta bagaimana hal tersebut mempengaruhi praktik organisasi sosial Islam Indonesia dalam interaksinya dengan negara. Terakhir, disimpulkan bahwa Hamka memandang *Syura* (musyawarah) sebagai penentu hubungan masyarakat dan negara serta pembeda antara kekuasaan negara dan agama. Penekanan Hamka terhadap musyawarah sebagai landasan hubungan masyarakat dan negara telah sangat meningkatkan kualitas demokrasi. Posisinya yang berpengaruh di dalam Muhammadiyah telah membentuk pendirian organisasi tersebut, menjadikannya kelompok keagamaan dan pemberdayaan sosial yang mandiri. Muhammadiyah telah

secara efektif bertindak sebagai organisasi masyarakat sipil, melawan rezim politik yang menindas untuk mendorong demokratisasi di Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Civil Society Organization (CSO); Islamic social organization; Tafsir al-Azhar; Hamka; Indonesian democracy*

## Introduction

Indonesian Islamic social organizations, seen as moderate,<sup>1</sup> have hesitated to position themselves concerning political power during the ongoing reform era.<sup>2</sup> While organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah claim to be independent and not focused on power, they still seek ministerial positions in the government. The National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*) does not align with NU's political goals, and the National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional*) does not represent Muhammadiyah members.<sup>3</sup> This dilemma has made it difficult for Islamic social organizations to criticize the government, as they are torn between their role as civil society groups and their relationship with those in power.

Studies on the role of Indonesian political Islam have been numerously explored by experts using various approaches and different perspectives. Among them is research on the relationship between Islam and democracy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>M. S. Prasojo, Z. H., Elmansyah, E. and Haji Masri, "Moderate Islam and the Social Construction of Multi-Ethnic Communities", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 9, Number 2 (2019), 217-239; Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 10, Number 1 (2020), 1-24; Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Appraising the Moderation Indonesian Muslims with Special Reference to Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama", *ADDIN*, Volume 12, Number 1 (2018), 1-30.

<sup>2</sup>Haedar Nashir et al., "Muhammadiyah's Moderation Stance in the 2019 General Election", *AlJami'ah*, Volume 57, Number 1 (2019), 1-24.

<sup>3</sup>Budiarti Utami Putri, "Muhammadiyah Kecewa Tak Jadi Menteri Pendidikan, Ini Alasannya", *Tempo*, 2020, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1264724/muhammadiyah-kecewa-tak-jadi-menteri-pendidikan-ini-alasannya/full&view=ok>.

<sup>4</sup>Masdar Hilmy, "Muslims' Approaches to Democracy: Islam and Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia", *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Volume 1, Number 1 (2007), 42-74.

Another study on Islam and politics in Indonesia discusses Muhammadiyah's moderate stance in the 2019 general election.<sup>5</sup> Other studies have also discussed the thoughts of prominent Indonesian figures such as Hamka's, on the relationship between politics and religion.<sup>6</sup> Some studies have overlooked the importance of the Indonesian interpretation of the Quran in shaping Islamic political thought in Indonesia. The Indonesian interpretation aims to adapt the Quran's teachings to the cultural context of Indonesia. Therefore, it is necessary to explore how this interpretation influences the political actions of Indonesia's Islamic community.

This article discusses the importance of the relationship between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the state in Indonesia's Islamic politics. CSOs are considered independent entities representing public interests and play a crucial role in managing various aspects of society. They are essential for a functioning democratic system, as they help promote accountability and high-quality government policies.<sup>7</sup> CSO is viewed as a social and cultural activity to enrich society instead of an institution emphasizing change.<sup>8</sup> CSO is seen in societies where people are organized based on their different interests. It involves the conditions and processes that lead to primary outcomes, like changes in social activities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Nashir, "Muhammadiyah's Moderation Stance..."

<sup>6</sup>Heri Herdiawanto, "Islam and the State: Political Thought Contextualisation of Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah), on the State, Religion and Morality in Indonesia", *Competition and Cooperation in Social and Political Sciences*, Proceedings of the Asia-Pacific Research in Social Sciences and Humanities, Indonesia, 7-9 November 2016, 141-147; Anwar Mujahidin, "Tafsir Alquran dan Praktik Politik Umat Islam Indonesia Perspektif Tafsir Al-Azhar dan Tafsir Al-Mishbah", *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith*, Volume 7, Number 2 (2017), 375-395.

<sup>7</sup>Auradian Marta, "State, Civil Society Organizations, Democracy and Democratization in Indonesia", *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, Volume 163 (2017), 212-15.

<sup>8</sup>Stefano Harney and Rita Olivia, *Civil Society and Civil Society Organizations in Indonesia*, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2003, 18-20.

<sup>9</sup>Cornelis Lay, "The Emerging of New Democratic Space: CSOs and Parliament in Post-Soeharto Indonesia", *PCD Journal*, Volume 5, Number 1 (2017), 1-24.

This article discusses how Indonesian Islamic social organizations aim to be independent and critical civil society organizations. It examines Hamka's views on the relationship between society and the state as outlined in Tafsir al-Azhar, highlighting his role as a rationalist and modernist thinker.<sup>10</sup> Hamka was a Muhammadiyah activist and the first chairperson of the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*). He unreservedly expressed his criticism of the government.<sup>11</sup> The interpretation of the Quran that Hamka wrote is most interesting to review as the root of Islamic social organization's critical thought when facing the state. This study discussed the relationship between society and the state in Tafsir al-Azhar. Then, it examined the implication of Hamka's thoughts on the relationship between society and the state in the early period of New Order.

This research focuses on the relationship between Indonesian exegesis and the political practices of the Islamic community in Indonesia, which has not been thoroughly explored in previous studies. It also examines the connection between Islamic social organizations and the state and how this impacts societal outcomes. The study utilized data from Tafsir al-Azhar and references on MUI, Muhammadiyah, and the New Order era to analyze Hamka's interpretations of verses related to society-state relations. The analysis involved restating, describing, and interpreting the data to gain a deeper understanding of religious support for democracy in Indonesia.

### **The characteristic of Tafsir al-Azhar**

Hamka (1908-1981), whose full name was Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, was born on February 17, 1908 in Sungai Batang, Minangkabau, West Sumatra.<sup>12</sup> His grandfather was a teacher of the Naqshabandiyah

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<sup>10</sup>Karel Steenbrink, "Qur'an Interpretations of Hamzah Fansuri (CA. 1600) and Hamka (1908-1982): A Comparison", *Studia Islamika*, Volume 2, Number 2 (1995), 73-95.

<sup>11</sup>Herdiawanto, "Islam and the State"...

<sup>12</sup>Ahmad Levi Fachrul Avivy, Jawiah Dakir, and Mazlan Ibrahim, "Isra'iliyyat in Interpretive

tariqa with many devoted followers.<sup>13</sup> In 1924, Hamka went to Java. He was introduced to the modern Islamic movement and studied under H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, R.M. Soerjopranoto, and H. Fakhruddin. In 1934, Hamka was assigned as a permanent member of Muhammadiyah Council, Central Sumatra. In 1946, he led the Muhammadiyah movement and was actively involved in Islamic da'wah and education activities.

Tafsir al-Azhar is Hamka's monumental work. It is considered *tafsir tahlili*, which refers to interpreting the Quran as a whole in line with the systematic arrangement of the Quran, beginning with Surah al-Fatihah and finishing with al-Nas. In 1962, Hamka began writing his exegesis of the Quran. The contents that made up Tafsir al-Azhar were initially materials delivered during the morning prayer sermon at Jakarta's Kebayoran Baru Mosque.<sup>14</sup> Other parts of the exegesis were mostly completed when Hamka was imprisoned due to his support of political Islam during the last years of the Sukarno administration.<sup>15</sup> Tafsir al-Azhar was initially published in 1967. A new version was then published in 1970, and this has been reprinted repeatedly, but it is unavailable online due to copyright reasons.

Similarly to Tafsir al-Manar of Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha, the discussion topics in Tafsir al-Azhar cover extensive subject areas that include hadith, fiqh, history, politics, current social issues, and modern scientific knowledge. Hamka admitted to having been influenced by at least two exegeses, namely Tafsir al-Maraghi of Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi

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Literature of Indonesia: A Comparison Between Tafsir Marah Labid and Tafsir Al-Azhar", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 6, Number 3 (2015), 401-407.

<sup>13</sup>Steenbrink, "Qur'an Interpretations..."

<sup>14</sup>Avivy et al, "Isra'iliyyat in Interpretive Literature of Indonesia..."

<sup>15</sup>Johanna Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunnī Tafsīr: Towards a Typology of Qur'an Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, Volume 12, Number 1-2 (2010), 56-82.

and Mahasin al-Ta'wil of Muhammad Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi.<sup>16</sup> Tafsir al-Azhar was based on the classical principle of *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* (interpreting the Quran using the Quran). Hamka often warns his readers against understanding the Quran based on external elaborations.<sup>17</sup> Hamka took a critical stance on the issue of *Isra'iliyyat*. He argued that *Isra'iliyyat* is not limited to the Jewish traditions introduced; it also includes all the narratives with uncorroborated origins. He only used *Isra'iliyyat* when it did not oppose the Quranic verses, authentic hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, and intellectual reasoning.<sup>18</sup>

Tafsir al-Azhar also refers to local traditions as sources of exegesis. Hamka accepted two ways of knowing God: direct intuition and knowledge using the heart (i.e., the inductive method in modern academic terminology). However, he clearly emphasized the inductive method using modern scientific knowledge. Hamka showed his intimacy with the mystical tradition and even referred to one of the hadith *qudsi* favored by this legacy, "I was a Hidden Treasure, so I created My servants, with My favors, so through it, they knew Me." The words "My favors" in the sentence were added in by Hamka, perhaps due to his concern of being accused of heresy. The teachings of mysticism are often likened to a minefield with dangerous spots and concealed enemies.<sup>19</sup>

### **Relationship between society and state in Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar**

The relationship between Islamic social organizations and the state is discussed in the verses of the Quran using varying linguistic styles and terminologies. Among them are verses containing the Islamic teaching's concept of public obedience to *ulil amri*. *Ulil amri* is defined as the person

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<sup>16</sup>Avivy et al, "Isra'iliyyat in Interpretive Literature of Indonesia..."

<sup>17</sup>Steenbrink, "Qur'an Interpretations..."

<sup>18</sup>Avivy et al, "Isra'iliyyat in Interpretive Literature of Indonesia..."

<sup>19</sup>Steenbrink, "Qur'an Interpretations..."

having been charged with authority or the ruler. Quranic verses containing the term *ulil amri* describe the criteria of *ulil amri* that the people must obey. The next concept is *al-malik*, which is also defined as a ruler. Verses containing the term *al-malik* explain who the real *al-malik* is and what authority the government (as the recipient of Allah's mandate) has over the people they govern. Another concept refers to the term *al-Imam*, which explains who it is, what qualifications someone worthy of being appointed as *imam* needs to have, and how one executes their leadership mission. The following concept is *Syura*, which describes the relational pattern between rulers and the ruled (the people).

Quranic verses containing the relationship between society and authority can be observed in Surah al-Nisa' verses 58-59, "*Indeed, Allah commands you to return trusts to their owners, and when you judge between people, judge with justice. What an excellent exhortation from Allah to you! Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. O you who believe, obey Allah and the Messenger; if you believe in Allah and the Last Day, that is better and more commendable in the end.*"

Surah al-Nisa' verse 58 is discussed under two headings: "Handing Over Trust" and "Holding the Scale of Justice." Hamka stated that that verse contains an Islamic teaching that rulers must uphold, and to give trust to the rightful owner. People responsible for executing a task should be capable and trustworthy to uphold the given task. Regarding the affairs of the Muslim community, from the emirs and others, when they assign subordinates, they should be the right person in the right place and capable of executing their tasks properly. Do not assign work to someone who requested it themselves. That should serve as a reason for not appointing them with that task.

Hamka also stated that for a Muslim, holding or being given the responsibility to conduct affairs of the state means having to uphold public trust. Affairs of the state are an inseparable part of religion. A Muslim is



not expected to be unconcerned with matters of the state. It is the Muslim community that shapes leaders. The Muslim is to uphold the law fairly. The holder of justice should bear in mind the trustworthy source of law, i.e., God's law, and apply it. Trust is mentioned before justice because genuine trust lies in the human soul. Once trust is upheld, recrimination and mutual exchange of indictments would not be brought before the judge. In verses 58 and 59, it is emphasized to obey the government and follow the laws of Allah. Hamka's explanation is focused on the importance of obeying rulers. The community, especially the believers, should follow these rules, with the ultimate authority being Allah. Allah's rules are revealed through His messengers, with Prophet Muhammad being the last. Believers must obey the final Messenger, as obeying him leads to obeying Allah. Following the Messenger is crucial for fulfilling the commands of Allah and perfecting one's religious practice.

Hamka defined *ulil amri* as people who master their profession. They are those who are masters, who rule among you. Hamka suggested that the word *minkum* (from *ulil amri minkum*) bears two meanings, first among you and second from you. Those who are masters or rulers come from your fellows or group, either by ascension or election you should acknowledge their authority as a reality. Hamka subsequently discussed the matter of responsibility of power wherein the matters of the state are divided into two parts, concerning religious affairs and general affairs. For matters exclusively relating to religion, we wait for instructions from the Messenger while the Messenger awaits revelations from Allah. However, general affairs such as war and peace, building places of worship, farming, raising livestock, and others are to be left to your consideration. The fundamental foundation of this is *Syura*, i.e., deliberation. The deliberation results shall then be made into a decision that all believers must obey. The people maintaining the continuity of the *Syura* are the *ulil amri*. The

public has handed their affairs over to the experts or masters in their field. They should consequently obey the decisions made by those experts. Such obedience to the decisions made by the *ulil amri* or the ruling party is the third obligation specified in religion which is on equal par with the obedience to Allah and the Messenger.

The principles of power relation are then expounded in the exegesis of Surah Ali 'Imran verse 26, "Say, 'O Allah, Lord of the dominion, You give dominion to whom You will and take it away from whom You will; You honor whom You will and humiliate whom You will. All good is in Your Hand. You are Most Capable of all things.'" Hamka stated that Muhammad came and brought along an ideology, which is Islam. Accordingly, an authority necessarily developed in Medina, Muhammad did not initially pursue power and authority and then developed the ideology. According to Hamka, *mulk* (the kingdom or dominion) that arises in *nubuwwah* (the prophethood) is far more eternal than *mulk* obtained through events of power and political struggle. Kings rise, kings fall, and people seize power. Dynasties rise and fall. The power or dominion of *nubuwwah* is over the human soul. It was such immense power that Allah had granted upon the messengers and prophets, so their power continues to live on despite their absence. Hamka argued that in modern times, the authority of prophethood is now held by ulemas who stand firm in their beliefs. He shared a story about an Indonesian ulema, Syaikh Abdulkarim Amrullah, who refused to show respect to the Japanese Emperor during a meeting in Bandung. Hamka criticized ulemas who are easily influenced by political power and no longer deserve to be respected or listened to for their rulings.

Regarding Surah al-Baqarah, particularly in verses 124-126, which recount the story of Abraham being appointed as an *imam*, Hamka explained that after Abraham successfully completed the trials Allah gave him, Abraham was appointed as a leader for humankind. This shows that only after proving oneself through challenges can one be responsible for guiding and setting an

example for others in religion, worship, and morals. God granted Abraham the *imam* position and asked Allah to appoint *imams* from his descendants who would continue his work. Allah agreed to this, but only for those descendants who believe and show superior virtue and devotion. Birthright alone does not guarantee greatness. Abraham's descendants were divided into two branches, the Ishmaelites and the Israelites, and both had respected *imams*. The final *imam*, Muhammad, was from the Ishmaelite lineage.<sup>20</sup>

The subsequent principle of power relation is deliberation. *Syura* refers to the deliberation of an issue that can unite differences into a mutual decision. Allah revealed in Surah al-Syura, verse 38, "And those who respond to their Lord and establish prayer, and conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and spend out of what We have provided for them." Hamka expounded that, in verse 38, there is a very close correlation between enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.<sup>21</sup> This verse discusses the importance of one's relationship with Allah through acts of worship and one's relationship with others through mutual consultations and deliberations.<sup>22</sup> It emphasizes that faith is not just for personal benefit but also involves social interactions and solidarity in everyday life.<sup>23</sup>

### **Muhammadiyah and MUI during the early period of the New Order**

The New Order refers to the period of Suharto's regime that reigned for 32 years in Indonesia. Suharto had been in power following the crisis of the Sukarno and Old Order regime as a result of the coup perpetrated

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<sup>20</sup>Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar 1...*, 606-608.

<sup>21</sup>Muchlis M. Hanafi, *Moderasi Islam: Menangkal Radikalisasi Berbasis Agama*, Jakarta: Pusat Studi Ilmu al-Qur'an, 2013, 77.

<sup>22</sup>Afrizal Nur and Mukhlis Lubis, "Konsep Wasathiyah dalam Al-Qur'an: Studi Komparatif antara Tafsir at-Tahrir wa at-Tanwir dan Aisar at-Tafasir", *Jurnal An-Nur*, Volume 4, Number 2 (2015), 205-225.

<sup>23</sup>Saikhu Rozi, "Pendidikan Moderasi Islam KH. Asep Saifuddin Chalim: Mencegah Radikalisme Agama dan Mewujudkan Masyarakat Madani Indonesia", *Tarbiya Islamia: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Keislaman*, Volume 8, Number 1 (2019), 26-43.

by the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*). In 1967, a General Assembly was held by the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara*), and the assembly decided to reject the accountability speech delivered by Sukarno and appoint General Suharto to hold the presidential office, replacing Sukarno. The 1966 MPRS XI Assembly also mandated a general election in 1968. However, the provision was amended during the 1967 Special Assembly of the People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, MPR), and the general election was to be held in 1971.

Between 1966 and 1980, Suharto solidified his power by giving the military a significant role in security and government and establishing the Functional Group Party (*Partai Golongan Karya*, Golkar) to support his authority. The 1971 election resulted in a decline in opposition against the ruling regime. Suharto, as the president had reinforced his power by amending the regulation to set Indonesia's House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*) and MPR as political institutions under his supervision. Suharto had the right to appoint one-fifth of DPR members and three-fifths of MPR members.<sup>24</sup> During the Old Order, from the 1950s to the 1960s, social organizations, including Islamic social organizations, were affiliated with various nationalist, Islamic, and communist political parties. Muhammadiyah was affiliated with Masyumi. Nahdhatul Ulama became a political party then. Social organizations had then attracted socio-political conflicts involving the masses up to the grassroots level.<sup>25</sup> The tension between Sukarno's administration and Masyumi as the opposition party influenced the Muhammadiyah. In order to maintain its existence, in 1959, Muhammadiyah held a *Tanwir* (pre-congress) meeting in

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<sup>24</sup>Dwi Wahyono Hadi and Gayung Kasuma, "Propaganda Orde Baru 1966-1980", *Verleden*, Volume 1, Number 1 (2012), 40-50.

<sup>25</sup>Pramono U. Tanthowi, "Muhammadiyah dan Politik: Landasan Ideologi Bagi Artikulasi Konstruktif", *Maarif*, Volume 14, Number 2 (2019), 93-113.

Kaliurang, Yogyakarta,<sup>26</sup> in which they decided to take a neutral political stance and not have any affiliation in any form with any political party, including Masyumi. Muhammadiyah relinquished its special membership in Masyumi just before it disbanded Masyumi in 1960.<sup>27</sup>

The decision made during the Tanwir meeting of Muhammadiyah in June 1966 in Bandung led to the formation of an independent political forum focused on rehabilitating Masyumi and its leaders who had been imprisoned. Despite efforts by Muhammadiyah and other Islamic organizations to lobby for their rehabilitation, the new government under Suharto and ABRI refused to grant it. This rejection prompted Muhammadiyah figures to establish a new Islamic party, Parmusi, during a Tanwir meeting in Ponorogo in 1969.<sup>28</sup> Before the 1971 general election, Parmusi faced multiple conflicts within their party and with the government.<sup>29</sup> In the 1970s, Parties were destructured to create political stability. Islamic parties (Parmusi, NU, PSII, and Perti) and other parties (PNI, Catholic Party, Parkindo, and IPKI) were forced to merge . The four Islamic parties, Parmusi, NU, PSII, and Perti, had united under the United Development Party (PPP).<sup>30</sup> The rulers of the New Order and the military supported Golkar and were antipathetic to the rise of Islam.<sup>31</sup>

In 1970, Muhammadiyah decided to distance itself from political parties. In the 1971 Congress, it was declared that the organization would

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<sup>26</sup>Majlis Diklitbang dan LPI PP Muhammadiyah, *1 Abad Muhammadiyah: Gagasan Pembaharuan Sosial Keagamaan*, ed. Syarifuddin Jurdi, Jakarta: Kompas, 2010.

<sup>27</sup>Suwarno, "Muhammadiyah dan Masyumi di Yogyakarta, 1945-1960", *Patrawidya*, Volume 16, Number 3 (2015), 407-28.

<sup>28</sup>Adil Mubarak, "Wajah Politik Muhammadiyah", *Jurnal Demokrasi*, Volume 11, Number 1 (2012), 215-222.

<sup>29</sup>Darmawijaya, "Islam dan Kekuasaan Orde Baru: Membaca Kembali Politik De-Islamisasi Soeharto", *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, Volume 10, Number 1 (2016), 63-84.

<sup>30</sup>Romli, "Partai Islam dan Pemilih Islam di Indonesia", *Jurnal Penelitian Politik*, Volume 1, Number 1 (2004): 29-48.

<sup>31</sup>Yudi Latif, *Intelegensia Muslim dan Kuasa: Geneologi Intelegensia Muslim Abad Ke-20*, Jakarta: Yayasan Abad Demokrasi, 2012, 522 and 627.

not engage in practical politics and would remain neutral toward all political powers. Muhammadiyah positioned itself as a cultural movement independent from political affiliations, allowing its members to express their political beliefs as long as it did not harm Islam or the organization.<sup>32</sup> In 1971, Muhammadiyah decided to remain politically neutral and focus on education and spiritual outreach. In 1978, at the 40th Congress in Surabaya, Muhammadiyah started exploring economic empowerment. The relationship between political Islam and the Suharto administration was uncertain, as the regime was against Muslim political autonomy and was wary of religious radicalization. The New Order government was wary of both extreme left and extreme right ideologies, including those based on religion.<sup>33</sup>

Hamka's relationship with Muhammadiyah was close and long-standing. He was a member of the Central Board from 1953 to 1971 when he declined reelection due to his age and health. Despite this, he was appointed an Advisor to the Central Board until he died in 1981.<sup>34</sup> Hamka was a respected teacher and role model for members of Muhammadiyah. In 1956, he was part of a team that discussed the relationship between Muhammadiyah and Masyumi during a meeting in Yogyakarta. The team decided that Muhammadiyah would continue to operate according to its principles. At the same time, political goals would be pursued through the Masyumi party, as both organizations shared the common goal of promoting Islam and building an Islamic society.<sup>35</sup> Since the disbandment of the Constituent Assembly (*Majelis Konstituante*), followed by the

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<sup>32</sup>Eunsook Jung, "Islamic Organizations and Electoral Politics in Indonesia: The Case of Muhammadiyah", *South East Asia Research*, Volume 22, Number 1 (2014), 73-86.

<sup>33</sup>Ahmad Choirul Rofiq, "Ideal Relationship Between Pancasila and Indonesian Muslims", *Aristo*, Volume 8, Number 2 (2020), 274-296.

<sup>34</sup>Ahmad Khoirul Fata, *Buya Hamka: Pemikiran & Perannya di Pentas Politik Nasional*, Semarang: RaSAIL, 2020, 51-52.

<sup>35</sup>Ahmad Khoirul Fata, *Buya Hamka...*, 172-173.

disbandment of Masyumi, Hamka began taking the da'wah in his struggle.<sup>36</sup> During the Guided Democracy era, Muhammadiyah softened its stance towards the ruling power by referring to Sukarno as their protector and honoring him, despite later regretting it when Sukarno admitted to being a Marxist.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the New Order era, Hamka remained consistent in his efforts to spread Islamic teachings. In 1971, Muhammadiyah returned to its original strategies from 1912 as a da'wah organization. Members were allowed to choose their political affiliations as long as it did not harm the organization. This decision to remain independent from any political party aligned with Hamka's belief in separating religious authority (*nubuwwah*) and state. The leaders of Muhammadiyah successfully kept their organization focused on religious activities and separate from political matters. By declaring neutrality in politics, Muhammadiyah was able to thrive as a non-governmental organization, emphasizing initiatives in health, education, and economic empowerment.

Concerning the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI), the New Order attempted to control the ulemas under a single coordination unit. In May 1975, the government issued an instruction to establish the regional level Ulema Council as a follow-up to the Indonesia-wide Islamic Preacher Workshop. The government announced the appointment of a preparatory committee to establish a national Ulema Council on 1 July 1975. Four prominent figures were in that committee, and they are H. Sudirman, Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah), KH. Abdullah Syafii, and KH. Syukri Ghazali. From 21 to 27 July 1975, the First National Assembly (*Musyawarah Nasional*) of the Ulema Council was held. At the end of the event, MUI was established, and Hamka was chosen

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<sup>36</sup>Ahmad Khoirul Fata, *Buya Hamka...*, 240.

<sup>37</sup>Muhammadiyah, *1 Abad Muhammadiyah...*, 206-213.

as the first chairperson. When receiving the delegations of the Indonesian Council of Mosques on 24 May 1975, President Suharto stated two main reasons for the establishment of MUI, i.e., the government's desire for the Muslim community to unite and the realization that the issues confronted by the nation could not be resolved without the due participation of ulemas. In other words, the government had an interest in getting ulemas and the Muslim community to participate in promoting development.

MUI was prohibited from being involved in practical politics. The task of MUI was merely limited to issuing *fatwa*, advice, or moral appeals to the government and the Muslim community in matters of religion and the nation. MUI also played a role as a mediator, bridging ethical and religious values and practical development programs.<sup>38</sup> The most crucial intermediary between MUI and the government was the Department of Religious Affairs as the administrator for matters relating to religion. The Department of Religious Affairs provided financial support for MUI and was the intermediary between MUI and the president. Unsurprisingly, MUI was regarded as a semi-government institution from the maintained patronage relationship.<sup>39</sup>

Hamka's willingness to chair MUI was expressed after performing *istikharah* (a prayer of guidance) and consulting with Muhammadiyah's leaders and his former Masyumi colleagues. Among his reasons for committing to lead were to support Indonesia's National Security program in facing the latent danger of communism and to remove feelings of suspicion between the government and the Muslim community. As a

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<sup>38</sup>Wildan Insan Fauzi, "Hamka Sebagai Ketua Umum MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) dalam Menghadapi Masalah Sosial Politik pada Masa Orde Baru 1975-1981", *FACTUM: Jurnal Sejarah dan Pendidikan Sejarah*, Volume 6, Number 2 (2017), 278-295.

<sup>39</sup>Subekty Wibowo, Hermanu Joebagio, and Saiful Bachri, "Peran Majelis Ulama Indonesia pada Masa Orde Baru 1975-1998 dan Relevansinya dalam Pembelajaran Sejarah", *Jurnal Candi*, Volume 17, Number 1 (2010), 80-95.



national-level ulema, the relationship between Hamka and the New Order government was good. Nevertheless, Hamka maintained extraordinary autonomy as an ulema who could not be bought due to his unwavering hold of the mandate and responsibility he had as a representative of the Muslim community before the government instead of a government representative before the Muslim community.<sup>40</sup>

During Hamka's first term as leader from 1975-1980, everything went well. However, in his second term, tension arose when MUI issued a fatwa prohibiting Muslims from joining Christmas celebrations, causing Hamka to resign rather than go against the government's wishes.<sup>41</sup> The fatwa issued by MUI was seen as a barrier to the government's efforts to promote religious tolerance. As a result, Hamka stepped down as the chair of MUI to preserve the organization's relationship with the government and uphold harmony. This demonstrates that Hamka was an ulema with an idealistic, critical, firm, moderate, and practical approach to improving his religion and nation.<sup>42</sup>

### **Opposing authoritarianism with Quranic interpretation**

According to Hamka, the leaders of society should be competent, reliable in keeping the trust afforded to them, and able to execute their leadership according to the rules of Allah and His Messenger (*shariah*). Leaders should not be authoritarian because they must be willing to conduct deliberations. The basis of a compliant relationship between people and rulers is *Syura*, which is deliberation. Hamka also introduced a concept that differentiates religious authority and state authority. According to Hamka, government (*mulk*), obtained through power and political struggles, is transient. A

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<sup>40</sup>Ahmad Khoiril Fata, *Buya Hamka...*, 245-247.

<sup>41</sup>Misar Sulaiman Jaya, "Hubungan Ulama dan Negara: Studi atas Perilaku dan Peran Poalitik Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) pada Masa Orde Baru", Thesis, UIN Jakarta, 2004, 47.

<sup>42</sup>Ahmad Khoiril Fata, *Buya Hamka...*, 257.

dynasty may rise, and another may fall. This differs from the power of *nubuwwah* (prophethood) that controls the human soul. It is substantial authority or power – Allah bestowed upon His Messenger and prophets so that while these prophets no longer exist, their power and authority continue to live. The power of *nubuwwah* is currently held by ulemas as the successors of the prophets. The ulemas that Hamka's meant are those who are resolute in their stance.

Hamka's thoughts on deliberation and his distinction between religious and state authorities show a substantial thought model that prioritizes values and substances rather than forms. Quranic messages and the Prophet's practices in government affairs serve as sources of relevant values to apply at any time. The substantial thought is that Islamic values align with the system of government in Indonesia, which is democracy.<sup>43</sup> The substantial thought model is achieved because *Tafsir al-Azhar* uses a contextual approach.<sup>44</sup> The contextual approach in interpreting the Quran avoids what Abou El Fadl considers interpretation authoritarianism. A Quranic interpreter may become authoritarian because she/he may be oriented toward representing the authentic voice of God. In order to prevent authoritarianism in interpretation, an approach to interpretation that differentiates the interpreter and the author, i.e., Allah, is necessary. The interpreter is an ordinary human being with several weaknesses, unable to free himself or herself from the confinement of history. The interpreter should be humble and mindful that what he/she says is not the absolute truth. The interpreter must acknowledge that there are other different and varying opinions.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>M. Dien Syamsuddin, "Islamic Political Thought and Cultural Revival in Modern Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, Volume 2, Number 3 (1995), 70-106.

<sup>44</sup>Herdiaiwanto, "Islam and the State..."

<sup>45</sup>Khaled M. Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2001.

Hamka's thoughts show far more advanced thinking than other thoughts developing in political Islam, which still argues for the alignment between Islam and democracy.<sup>46</sup> Hamka was not a utopian who idealized the government model that the Prophet Muhammad (*salaf*) had textually (literally) developed.<sup>47</sup> The emphasis on the value of deliberation as the core of the relationship between society and state is a crucial contribution to strengthening the quality of democracy. Hamka's thoughts in *Tafsir al-Azhar* reinforce the democratic system applied in Indonesia.

Hamka's thoughts on the relationship between society and the state above had implications on his standpoint and the standpoint of Islamic social organizations that adhered to the same ideology as he did, namely Muhammadiyah. Hamka held a crucial position in Muhammadiyah, which tried to liberate itself from the pressure exerted by the regime by separating itself from political organizations. Muhammadiyah decided to become an independent religious civil organization. Muhammadiyah was a notable member of the Masyumi Party. Its separation from the Masyumi Party was a reformative step from the traditional thought that considers religion and authority (*al-din wa al daulah*) as two inseparable sides.<sup>48</sup> Muhammadiyah decided to return to its role as an independent civil society organization that focuses on social empowerment.

As a member of the drafting team of the Muhammadiyah Personality Guidelines (*Pedoman Kepribadian Muhammadiyah*), Hamka influenced the Muhammadiyah organization. Muhammadiyah's personality is a

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<sup>46</sup>Hilmy, "Muslims' Approaches to Democracy: Islam and Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia." And Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Close Call", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Volume 50, Number 3 (2014), 347-369.

<sup>47</sup>Andrew F. March, "Taking People as They Are: Islam as a Realistic Utopia in the Political Theory of Sayyid Qutb", *American Political Science Review*, Volume 104, Number 1 (2010), 189-207.

<sup>48</sup>Jung, "Islamic Organizations and Electoral Politics ...

formulation that describes the nature of Muhammadiyah and guidelines for Muhammadiyah's activities and struggles with noble qualities.<sup>49</sup> Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nashir, stated that Hamka is a remarkable figure in Muhammadiyah who has presented peaceful, critical, modernist, and advanced thoughts and attitudes. Hamka's criticism was harsh in seeking the truth and uniting ideas about freedom of thought, freedom of will, and freedom of soul.<sup>50</sup>

Muhammadiyah's independence as a civil organization was a new movement model in political Islam. Political Islam is not only a movement aimed at achieving authority and power.<sup>51</sup> Muhammadiyah, as an independent organization, may become a pillar of democracy by becoming a non-governmental civil organization. Civil society organizations can play a role in supporting the manifestation of a democratic government, it can assume a critical role in ensuring quality and accountability of government policies imposed upon citizens.<sup>52</sup> Muhammadiyah, as a civil organization, can also empower the people. Muhammadiyah and other mainstream Islamic social organizations have become Indonesian civil society's backbone. They critically support nonsectarian principles in the heart of Indonesia's constitution, Pancasila<sup>53</sup>. The role that Muhammadiyah assumes in political Islam is a moral movement not oriented toward power and authority.

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<sup>49</sup>Tendy Choerul Kamal and Agus Mulyana, "Peranan Buya Hamka dalam Gerakan Pembaharuan Muhammadiyah Tahun 1925-1966", *FACTUM: Jurnal Sejarah dan Pendidikan Sejarah*, Volume 8, Number 2 (2019), 213-224.

<sup>50</sup>Azim Arrasyid, "Muhammadiyah Banyak Mewarisi Khazanah Pemikiran Buya Hamka yang Berkemajuan", [https://hidayatullah.com/berita/nasional/2021/03/13/203734/muhammadiyah-banyak-mewarisi-khazanah-pemikiran-buya-hamka-yang-berkemajuan.html#google\\_vignette](https://hidayatullah.com/berita/nasional/2021/03/13/203734/muhammadiyah-banyak-mewarisi-khazanah-pemikiran-buya-hamka-yang-berkemajuan.html#google_vignette).

<sup>51</sup>Andrew F. March, "Political Islam: Theory", *Annual Review of Political Science*, Volume 18 (2015), 103-123.

<sup>52</sup>Auradian Marta, "State, Civil Society Organizations, Democracy...

<sup>53</sup>Greg Barton, Ihsan Yilmaz, and Nicholas Morieson, "Authoritarianism, Democracy, Islamic Movements and Contestations of Islamic Religious Ideas in Indonesia", *Religions*, Volume 12, Number 8 (2021), 1-20.

The politically neutral standpoint that Muhammadiyah took allowed it to have greater latitude when the regime turned repressive, and Muhammadiyah has survived through the different eras to this day. Muhammadiyah was also able to play its role so as not to be co-opted by the repressive regime.<sup>54</sup> An unconsolidated democracy will create an authoritarian regime. Such a regime's features include the marginalization of the opposition, resulting in the absence of a group critical to the ruler's policies.<sup>55</sup> Such an authoritarian phenomenon occurred in Indonesia's Old and New Order regimes.<sup>56</sup> Muhammadiyah was even facing potential disbandment following the disbandment of the Masyumi Islamic Party due to the stance taken by the repressive regime.

## Conclusion

Hamka's thoughts in *Tafsir al-Azhar* regarding the relationship between society and state are substantial and contextual. The Quran and Hadith of the Prophet are relevant sources of values that strengthen the democratic system. The primary relationship between society and the state is *Syura*, i.e., deliberation. Religious authority is also separated from state authority. The concept of making a distinction between religious authority and state authority becomes the basis for accepting Muhammadiyah's separation from its political party and becoming a social organization. Muhammadiyah affirms itself as an independent non-state civil organization. Islamic social organizations focus on social empowerment programs. The relationship maintained between Islamic social organizations and the state is one of constructive criticism in order to prevent authoritarianism.

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<sup>54</sup>Elina Schleutker, "Co-Optation and Repression of Religion in Authoritarian Regimes", *Politics and Religion*, Volume 14, Number 2 (2021), 209-240.

<sup>55</sup>Shafi M. D. Mostofa and D. B Subedi, "Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism in Bangladesh", *Politics and Religion*, Volume 14, Number 3 (2020), 1-29.

<sup>56</sup>Pratikno, "Keretakan Otoritarianisme Orde Baru dan Prospek Demokratisasi", *JSP*, Volume 2, Number 2 (1998), 18-33.

The CSO concept used in this study enabled us to find an opportunity to explain the role of Islamic social organizations in Indonesia's democratic system. Islamic social organizations have promoted civil society's critical role in a democratic system. On the other hand, Islamic social organizations also have a crucial role in preventing chaos when political power is leaning towards an authoritarian state and repressive attitude. Islamic social organizations can maintain a balance between the implementation of government authority or power and public monitoring.

The current study is limited to the perspective of a single Indonesian Quranic interpreter without comparing it to other Indonesian Quranic interpreters with their respectively diverse ideological backgrounds. Comparative studies on Indonesia's prominent Quranic interpreters are necessary to examine the Quranic texts' influences and the interpreters' different ideological backgrounds. Accordingly, future studies need to be conducted by involving several Indonesian Quranic interpreters as objects of study so that a more comprehensive description of the role of Islamic society in Indonesia's democratic system can be acquired.

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